

Former City Councilman in 'Treasure Island'

When former Baytown City Councilman Scott Sheley retired from a 35-year career in education, he headed right back to school — only this time, as a student at Lee College.

Most days, you can spot the longtime public servant around campus in his best red, stopping between classes to greet his fellow students and instructors with a warm smile and a listening ear. Starting Thursday, Oct. 29, you can also find him on the main stage at the Performing Arts Center (PAC) for a four-show run as fair-minded scientist Dr. Livesey in the Lee College Players' production of "Treasure Island."

"Lee College in itself is a great Broadway show," said Sheley, who first attended the college from 1972-1974 as an athlete on the now-defunct swim team under Coach Ron Ummel, an instrumental figure in his life. Like many of the students he encounters today, he juggled his nightly studies in the aviation program with grueling morning practices and three different jobs.

"Community colleges are filled with interesting stories," Sheley said. "When I walk down the sidewalk, I say hello to everyone I see. I like to purposefully wander the halls of different buildings to meet new people. You have many characters, and the production doesn't go on without them. Everyone has a 'what can I do for you' attitude."

In need of a fine arts elective to fulfill requirements for his associate degree in general studies, Sheley enrolled this semester in a theater class taught by Kim Martin — an old and favorite friend with whom he participated in the drama program at Ross S. Sterling High School. With Martin serving as director for "Treasure Island," he felt more comfortable and confident in auditioning for the show.

"(Martin) is extremely talented, and he passes on that talent through his teaching," Sheley said. "I admire and wish I had his patience and openness to creative thought. He's not just a director, he's an inspiration, and he has attracted some very talented young people to Lee College theatre."

To prepare for his debut as Dr. Livesey, Sheley watched at least 25 movies in hopes of polishing his delivery of the character's British accent. Plans for cannon fire and musket fights live on stage also pushed his physical limits during rehearsals for the play, which is based on the classic Robert Louis Stevenson tale of pirates and buried treasure.

In fact, "Treasure Island" was one of the first stories that Sheley, who struggled with reading as a child, successfully completed on his own. It's one of many ways that his post-retirement return to Lee College — as a student, president of the Former-Lee alumni association and member of the Monica Boyd Foundation Board of Directors — has helped bring his life experience full circle.

"They gave me my foundation in collegiate education," Sheley said, "and now I want that Lee College degree on my wall. Every day, I'm rediscovering my abilities and stimulating my mind. I've learned that when you stop thinking and start doing, someone will come along and tap you on the shoulder and things will keep progressing. Lee College makes you a better person. It brings you back to center."